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SUBJECT: MORE ETHIOPIAN MFA THOUGHTS ON SOMALIA NEXT STEPS

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 2867
[1](#)B. ADDIS ABABA 2848

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO. REASON: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Summary. In response to the Ambassador's pushback that Ethiopia not hijack the upcoming Nairobi summit with radical "regime change," Ethiopian State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Tekeda Alemu told the Ambassador on October 21 that the Ethiopian government saw three available options to deal with the political instability in Somalia: first, maintain the status quo within the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG), keep TFG President Abdullahi Yusuf, and wait for the Djibouti process to work; second, replace TFG Prime Minister Hassan Hussein Nur Adde; and third, change president, prime minister, and speaker, but keep the existing parliament. Of the three, Tekeda suggested that the most workable option might be a "status quo plus" option where the intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) ministers, at the upcoming summit in Nairobi, would urge Yusuf to work with PM Nur Adde towards a post Yusuf transition government that would include elements of the opposition Alliance for the Liberation of Somalia (ARS). Tekeda speculated that a post Yusuf era might see the ascendancy of a Hawiye/Haber Gedir/Ayr president and a Darood prime minister. Tekeda also said deteriorating Ethio-Sudanese relations were complicating Ethiopia's coordination within IGAD on Somalia. Separately on October 24, Ethiopian Special Envoy to Somalia Abdetta Dribssa told the Ambassador that Ethiopia's objective at the summit was to create political conditions that would allow the Ethiopian military to withdraw from Somalia without leaving a vacuum. Abdetta said those conditions may or may not include changing the TFG leadership. Abdetta was also concerned that the summit could get "out of hand" as no one could control what the TFG parliament would do. Abdetta said the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) force commander General Okello was insisting that if the Ethiopian military withdrew from Mogadishu, AMISOM wanted to leave in advance of the Ethiopians. Abdetta also reported that progress was being made on the establishment of a new Benadir Administration. Embassy Addis Ababa notes that although Prime Minister Meles and senior MFA officials have toned down their "remove Yusuf" rhetoric over the past week, the Ethiopian government remains convinced that a major shake-up within the TFG is necessary for any positive political progress in Somalia. End Summary.

Ethiopia's Options on the Way Forward for Somalia

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Ethiopian State Minister Tekeda said the increasing violence and instability in Mogadishu was derived from political instability. If not addressed, violence will

increase and allow extremists to add to instability and threaten Ethiopia's security. The Ethiopian government saw three options to deal with the political crisis: (1) maintain the status quo: keep Yusuf and allow the Djibouti process to work, (2) replace PM Nur Adde, or (3) change the president, PM, and speaker, but avoid at all cost changing the parliament. Dr. Tekeda said that PM Meles said on October 21 that "caution" was critical, that the IGAD summit "must not get out of hand," and that finding a solution to a "post-Yusuf era" was essential without creating more instability.

13. (S/NF) Dr. Tekeda suggested that a "status quo plus" option might be preferable. That is to seriously warn Yusuf to support PM Nur Adde, work towards a transition (post Yusuf), include the ARS in government, and stress the importance of international support (money, etc.). Dr. Tekeda said this "status quo plus" was the most "stable" among the three options, but assumes that the international community will actively help. However, he acknowledged that in the end this option still may not lead to a workable solution. Dr. Tekeda repeated that everything is and must be open for discussion at the IGAD summit, but there must be careful consultations: UN Special Representative to Somalia Amedou Ould-Abdallah must be "reigned in" and work within the IGAD process, the ARS must be part of the solution, Djibouti must be the site of future meetings, and the parliamentarians must be carefully cultivated, and not alienated, altered, or changed. Tekeda said his government was currently meeting with Djiboutian officials who are not happy about the IGAD summit to gain their support. (Note: Ethiopia was opposed to

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holding the IGAD summit in Nairobi because they distrust the motivations of the international community represented there, and they view as counterproductive what they perceive as a lack of coordination between the international community and the NGOs, particularly within the various organs of the United Nations. End Note.)

14. (S/NF) Tekeda emphasized that a post Yusuf era would be designed and implemented by the Somalis themselves. Dr. Tekeda speculated that a Hawiye/Haber Gedir/Ayr clan member might be the president, and the prime minister would then most likely be a Darood. But Dr. Tekeda cautioned that removing Yusuf could be dangerous and unstable because it was not clear how the Majerteen clan would react. Whatever option was selected, Dr. Tekeda stressed that there must be consultations with the IGAD group of ministers, and the Somalis themselves, and that this would take time.

15. (S/NF) Tekeda said deteriorating Ethio-Sudanese relations were also a complication to IGAD coordination on Somalia. On October 21, Sudanese officials raided the Ethiopian defense attachQ's house in Khartoum, temporarily arrested the sister (who has diplomatic immunity), and took materials from the house. Dr. Tekeda said this was being handled quietly to avoid losing Sudan at the IGAD summit. But Sudan is being more bold, Dr. Tekeda said, in responding to EthiopiaQ,s relations with the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), particularly arms transfers, and was trying to use Eritrea to undercut, and keep pressure on Ethiopia. Ethio-Sudanese tensions would continue to increase, and be more difficult to manage, Dr. Tekeda speculated.

16. (S/NF) The Ethiopian government envisions that the IGAD summit will include: (1) ministerial meetings (pre-meetings have already begun); (2) briefings by envoys; and (3) a meeting between ministers and parliamentarians, but the modalities have not been set as to who will attend and who will speak, and Tekeda assessed that this meeting could be the most contentious.

Abdetta: IGAD is About Ethiopian Withdrawal From Somalia

¶7. (S/NF) On October 24 in a separate meeting, Ethiopia's Special Envoy to Somalia Abdetta Dribssa told the Ambassador and PolOff that Ethiopia's objective for the IGAD summit was to obtain "concrete action" from the TFG in order to facilitate Ethiopia's withdrawal from Somalia. He said "all the options were bad," and contained inherent risks. Abdetta noted that at IGAD if the TFG could be made to "work" without changing the TFG leadership, that was acceptable, but was skeptical that this was possible. Rather, he said, a leadership change may be necessary to produce a functional government. Nevertheless, Ethiopia could not continue to remain in Somalia for much longer. He said Ethiopia's deployment was too expensive, the TFG was failing, and Ethiopia was not getting any help from the international community. He stressed that if the international community wanted Ethiopia to remain in Somalia until either the TFG was able to stand on its own, or until a fully capable international peacekeeping force was deployed, then the international community should act to support Ethiopia. He asserted that Ethiopia would withdraw from Somalia within the next few months, but it was up to the international community to help shape what would be left behind.

¶8. (S/NF) Abdetta said personally he was concerned that the summit could get out of hand. He said no one could really control the parliament. He stated that the mood within the parliament was for "regime change," and that the ministers had enough votes to impeach President Yusuf if they decided to do so. He said Yusuf's signing of the Addis Ababa Agreement in August had backfired, and that the anti-Yusuf movement within the parliament was gaining strength. The speaker was also a problem, and taking an increasingly anti-Yusuf stance.

¶9. (S/NF) Abdetta also criticized Ould-Abdallah for spending too much energy negotiating between the TFG and the ARS about an Ethiopian withdrawal, which Ethiopia would decide on its own, rather than focusing on reconciliation and political progress that would establish a functioning TFG. He emphasized that Somalia needs a functioning government,

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not endless rounds of talks that produce nothing, and have no impact on the ground. He noted that Ould-Abdallah was planning to have the cease-fire signed during the October 25-26 Djibouti meetings, and then bring ARS/Djibouti to the Nairobi summit to discuss the formation of a unity government. Abdetta added that the TFG itself was not fully on board with the Djibouti process, and he questioned how that process could continue without a change within the TFG.

AMISOM Does Not Want to Be Left Behind

¶10. (S/NF) Abdetta said he had improved relations between AMISOM and Ethiopia, and that they communicated on a regular basis. He said the force commander, General Okello, told him that if the Ethiopians leave Mogadishu, AMISOM wanted to leave the city ahead of the Ethiopian military. Under no circumstances did Okello want his forces left behind without Ethiopian troops in the area. Okello also told Abdetta that President Yusuf had been attempting to blackmail Okello into using AMISOM to surround Bakara Market so that Yusuf's Darood militia could loot from the Hawiye merchants. As blackmail, Yusuf was threatening to expose Okello as someone who had participated in the looting of the Democratic Republic of the Congo during Uganda's previous deployments there. Okello also suggested to Abdetta that Ethiopia be formally brought into AMISOM as a peacekeeping partner to establish international recognition of Ethiopia's role in stabilizing Somalia. Abdetta opined that Ethiopia might be convinced to stay in Somalia longer if the international community legitimized Ethiopia's Somalia deployment in such a fashion or made Ethiopia part of a future stabilization force.

¶11. (S/NF) Since September, the Benadir region has been governed by a caretaker administration, but the selection process for new regional representatives was underway, according to Abdetta. He said the regional council would be made up of 64 members with four members from each district, and an as of yet unidentified number of representatives drawn from the smaller subclans in the area. Abdetta said President Yusuf appeared to be backing Mohammed Dheere, the most recent governor of Benadir, to be elected back into that post. Yusuf fears that if Dheere was not re-instated, Yusuf would lose his ties to the Hawiye/Habir Gedir. Dheere has been buying both weapons and votes to secure his reinstatement, according to Abdetta. Although Dheere, on October 17, publicly accused PM Nur Adde of conspiring with al-Shabaab, Dheere and the Prime Minister met together on October 20. Abdetta declined to discuss the content of the meeting. The top two other candidates for Benadir were Abdul Qadr Osoble and Eng Abdi Jino, both of whom Abdetta said were worrisome because of their reported ties to extremists within the Islamic Courts. He did not know when the new administration would be elected, but he speculated that it would be sometime after the IGAD summit.

Comment

¶12. (S/NF) Since the Ambassador began pushing back against Ethiopia's plans for radical changes within the TFG, per instructions from Washington, both Prime Minister Meles (Ref A) and State Minister Tekeda have softened their rhetoric in conversations with EmbOffs, particularly towards the removal of President Yusuf. Nevertheless, Meles and Tekeda continue to insist that, although "caution" is warranted, "all options are on the table," including the replacement of one or all of the three top TFG leaders. The Ethiopian government is frustrated with the situation in Somalia, and they want out. Meles, Tekeda, and Abdetta, all apparently speaking from the same talking points, are instead covering their intentions by couching possible leadership changes more carefully in such terms as "it is for the Somalis to decide, not us." Tekeda's previous comments (Ref B) were unequivocally clear that they have lost all faith in Yusuf and want him replaced. It is also entirely possible that the TFG parliament itself could decide to change their leadership with no external encouragement. Whatever happens with the leadership, Ethiopia will continue to insist that some elements of the ARS, probably including Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, are officially brought into the TFG, either during the summit or

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at some point thereafter. We assess that the Ethiopian government remains convinced that a major shake-up of the TFG is needed for political progress, but other than seeking ARS inclusion, and looking for a "post Yusuf era," (sooner rather than later) we do not yet think they have decided on any specific option, and are cautiously feeling their way towards the IGAD summit where anything could happen. End Comment.

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